

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, May 6, 2016

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Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. Teachers invited to open-line conference call May 23

We want everyone to have a chance to give us direct, personal feedback and to share ideas about what's working in our schools, so we are initiating a series of open-line phone calls so we can talk directly with teachers. Next week, we will send this message to all teachers:

Teachers have a unique perspective on education – you are the ones making it all happen. We value your insights and your feedback, and we're always looking for new ways to continue our conversations. With that goal in mind, we have set up a series of open-line phone calls so we can speak with one another directly on a regular basis.

The first call will take place on Monday, May 23:

Date: May 23

Time: 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Call-in number: (701) 801-1220

Meeting ID#: 862-142-448

No RSVP required. We will post more information about the call (including an agenda) on the Meeting Wall:

<https://www.startmeeting.com/wall/862-142-448>

2. East Greenwich High students selected as Presidential Scholars

The U.S. Department of Education has announced that the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars has selected two students from East Greenwich High School as 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars: Grace E.

Miner and Xiao Yi Wu. Grace and Xiao are among 160 high-school seniors recognized this year “for their accomplishments in academics, the arts, or career and technical education.” Two teachers from East Greenwich High School, whom Grace and Xiao have selected, are also honored as 2016 Presidential Scholars Distinguished Teachers: Karen Izzo, an English teacher, and Frank Lenox, who teaches physics. They all will be honored in a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on June 19. Congratulations to these top students and their teachers!

3. R.I. educators honored at White House ceremony

Several Rhode Island educators were in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, where President Obama honored great educators from around the country for their work. Rhode Islanders honored included: Bishop Hendricken High School Principal Joseph T. Brennan, Jr.; Tracy L. Lafreniere, of the North Smithfield Elementary School, the Rhode Island Teacher of the Year; David Tedeschi, a guidance counselor at the Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School, in Providence and Alan J. Tenreiro, of Cumberland High School, the National Secondary School Principal of the Year. Rhode Islanders can be proud of these four educators.

4. Providence educator named R.I. Elementary School Principal of the Year

Denise Missry, principal of the Asa Messer Elementary School, in Providence, has just been selected by her colleagues in the Rhode Island Association of School Principals, as the 2016 Rhode Island Elementary School Principal of the Year. Congratulations to Denise on receiving this honor!

5. PETA awards R.I. an A rating for policies that support compassionate students, spare animals' lives

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has graded states based on their use of modern non-animal biology teaching tools and their policies with regard to a student's right to opt out of dissection exercises. PETA has awarded Rhode Island "an A rating for having an outstanding dissection choice policy that supports compassionate students as well as modern science education and that also spares animals, lives." A link to the PETA report is available [here](#).

6. R.I. educators publish article on proficiency-based education for adult learners

Nancy Labonte, an adult-education specialist at RIDE, recently attended the national Coalition for Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference and co-facilitated (with two Rhode Island adult-education practitioners) two sessions on our work on proficiency-based education for adult learners. The executive director and president of the Coalition invited them to submit an article to gauge further interest nationally in proficiency-based education for adult education as well as to inform the Coalition on planning for a strand on proficiency-based education at next year's conference. You can read their article in COABE Capitol Hill Day at this site (see under "Competency," lower left-hand column):

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1112004712009&ca=b5caec62-46cb-40f9-8c02-d6ffbb1f1c53>.

From RIDE

Instruction:

7. High-school students to receive letters explaining opportunities for advanced coursework

The College Board has identified more than 3,000 Rhode Island sophomores and juniors who participated in the PSAT test last fall as among students who should be encouraged to take advanced-level courses, including AP, dual or concurrent enrollment, and additional coursework experiences. Governor Gina M. Raimondo and Commissioner of Education Ken Wagner will send a letter to these students in an effort to congratulate them on their achievements to date and to encourage them to continue to pursue high levels of achievement. The letters will be mailed shortly and should be received by students by the middle of the month.

The letter will direct the students to learn more about how they can take advantage of these opportunities by reviewing included material from the College Board, speaking with their school counselors, and visiting these site for more information:

- www.ride.ri.gov/dualenrollment to learn more about how they can access dual-enrollment courses at our public colleges at no cost to students or families (pending funding in the Fiscal Year 2017 state budget), thanks to Governor Raimondo's Prepare RI initiative;
- <http://www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework> to learn more about opportunities through the Rhode Island Advanced Coursework Network;
- www.CS4RI.org to learn more about how they can access computer-science courses; and
- <https://studentscores.collegeboard.org> to view PSAT/NMSQT online score report results (by logging into their College Board Account), learn about the AP courses that may be right for them, receive a Khan Academy personalized practice plan, search colleges and scholarships, and investigate potential college majors.

Questions regarding this mailing and additional advanced coursework opportunities for students can be directed to the RIDE team, at advancedcoursework@ride.ri.gov.

Educators:

8. Educators encouraged to participate in surveys on evaluations; window closes May 13

Similar to past years, RIDE seeks to better understand educators' experiences with all of the Rhode Island evaluation systems. Feedback will help us to identify the successes and challenges of implementation and to guide continued improvements. As always, responses are confidential.

We are pleased to announce incentives! We will hold a drawing to randomly select 8 educators who complete the survey in its entirety. They will have the opportunity to choose classroom or office supplies from W.B. Mason valued at \$50 per drawing.

Please use the appropriate link to complete the survey. You can also find links to the survey on the Educator Quality & Evaluation page of our website. The survey window closes on Friday, **May 13**.

Central Office Administrators:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CentralOfficeeval16>

Building Administrators:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BAeval16>

Teachers: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/teachereval16>

Support Professionals:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPeval16>

If you have any questions or concerns about these surveys, please contact Carrie Appel, at Carrie.Appel@ride.ri.gov or 222-8955.

9. RIDE begins new training format for new evaluators; evaluator-training academy to be offered August 11 and 12

All new evaluators using the Rhode Island Model in the 2016-17 school year are required to successfully complete training. Previously, this training was a four-day training prior to the start of the school year. In order to better reflect best practice, RIDE has changed the format and timing of the training. As part of this new training sequence, participants will engage in pre-work on their own, attend a two-day in-person academy in the summer, receive coaching as needed throughout the year, and then attend a one-day, in-person training in the spring.

The first part of the training sequence, the two-day academy, will be held at the Cranston High School East Library Media Center, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., on **August 11 and 12**. The academy will prepare personnel evaluating teachers and support professionals to accurately observe and rate practice, lead professional feedback conversations, approve student learning or outcome objectives, and use the Educator Performance and Support System. Attendance is required on both days, and about an hour of pre-work is required prior to the academy. Lunch will be provided both days. Register on Eventbrite, at:

<https://ridesummer.eventbrite.com>.

School Operations:

10. Facilities-assessment teams will visit LEAs beginning next week (May 9-13)

Facilities-assessment teams will be back in your LEA per the posted schedule to perform the Educational Space Survey:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Funding-and-Finance-Wise-Investments/SchoolBuildingAuthority/Ed_Program_Survey_Schedule_DRAFT.PDF .

Your designated point of contact will hear from a member of the Jacobs team prior to your LEA's being visited. As with the previous assessments, all of our assessors working within your facility will have passed the Attorney General's required background check.

The teams will check in at the front desk and request a few minutes of the principal's designated representative's time to discuss the facility and to answer a few survey questions. Please let the school's principal and staff know that facilities-assessment teams will be on site and will be walking the entire campus and buildings. The assessors will work diligently to minimize disruption to all instructional activities and will be mindful of all school policies and procedures regarding visitors.

The teams will do their best to stay on schedule and will communicate with you as soon as possible if an unforeseeable schedule change occurs. If you have any questions about this facilities assessment, please contact Joseph da Silva, Ph.D., at 222-4294, or via email at joseph.dasilva@ride.ri.gov.

Data Collection:

11. *Reminder: Roster Verification to begin on Monday (May 9)*

The first stage of Roster Verification will begin on **Monday** (May 9) and run through May 23. During this stage, principals will review the teacher, course, and section data submitted to RIDE. The second stage of review will open May 25 and run through June 3. During this time, teachers will review their rosters and principals will monitor the status of their teachers' progress. Once this second stage is completed, principals will verify and sign off on the rosters, between June 6 and June 22. Please note that beginning this year teachers in grades 4-8 will participate in the roster-verification process (as opposed to grades 3-7 in the past).

Updated user guides for principals and teachers are available at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem\(EPSS\).aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem(EPSS).aspx).

In preparation for this year's roster-verification process, please ensure that all principals are familiar with your policy regarding contributing educators. You can find our updated guidance on Establishing Teacher-Course-Student Connections at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/TCS%20guidance%202016%20FINAL.pdf>

If you have any questions about roster verification, please submit a help desk ticket, at: <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

12. *Reminder: Non-certified staff due May 26*

In accordance with the federal report X059, we need your non-certified-staff data to be submitted via the eRIDE Personnel Data

Collection module by **May 26**. This reporting includes all staff in the following categories:

- Elementary School Counselors
- Elementary Teachers
- Instructional Coordinators and Supervisors to the staff
- Kindergarten Teachers
- LEA Administrative Support Staff
- LEA Administrators
- Librarians/Media Specialists
- Library/Media Support Staff
- Paraprofessionals/Instructional Aides
- Pre-kindergarten Teachers
- School Administrative Support Staff
- School Administrators
- School Counselors
- Secondary School Counselors
- Secondary Teachers
- Student Support Services Staff
- Ungraded Teachers
- All Other Support Staff

The personnel-assignment submission [user guide](#) will provide you with details on how to submit this data.

If you have any questions about the personnel-assignment submission, please submit a help desk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

13. ***Reminder: Several data collections open, are due in the next two months***

The following are upcoming data-collection deadlines for May and June:

- Monday (May 9): [Roster Verification Principle Review \(Stage 1\) – Opens](#)
- May 16: [Preliminary Coordinated Early Intervening Services - Due](#)
- May 17: [Special Education Census – Due](#)
- May 17: [Special Education Census Reporting - Due](#)
- May 23: [Roster Verification Principal Review \(Stage 1\) – Closes](#)
- May 24: [Special Ed Census, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)
- May 24: [Special Ed Census Reporting, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)
- May 25: [Roster Verification Teacher Review \(Stage 2\) – Opens](#)
- June 2: [Reporting Student Contacts - Due](#)
- June 3: [Annual School Health Report - Due](#)
- June 6: [Preliminary Program Core Data - Due](#)
- June 6: [Roster Verification Teacher Review \(Stage 2\) – Closes](#)
- June 6: [Roster Verification Principle Signoff \(Stage 3\) – Opens](#)

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer document.

From the U.S. Department of Education (USED)

14. USED, USDA to hold online forum on summer meals on Wednesday (May 11)

We are pleased to invite you to the iForum “Power Up with Summer Meals in Schools!!” – co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on **Wednesday (May 11)**, from 1-2 p.m.

This online webinar will discuss proven strategies for community stakeholders to develop and expand [USDA Summer Meals Programs](#) in partnership with local schools. Please sign up [HERE](#), and forward the invitation to peers who might benefit from this information.

USDA Summer Meals Programs help close the nutrition gap children face over the summer months—a time when children no longer receive school meals they relied on throughout the school year. USDA reports that 22 million children and teens receive free and reduced-priced meals through the National School Lunch Program, yet only about 1 in 5 of those (around 3.8 million) participate in summer-meal programs.

Participants of this iForum will gain clarity about how USDA Summer Meals Programs operate and will learn from school districts that have overcome obstacles to administer the programs effectively. We will be joined by the Port Huron Area School District, in Michigan, and Montgomery County Public Schools, in Maryland, who will share their inspiring success stories.

During this exciting session, we will:

- introduce USDA Summer Meals Programs and provide an overview on how the program operates;
- hear how the school districts have overcome challenges in their journey to operating successful summer meals programs;
- answer your questions.

Again, please RSVP [HERE](#) and forward the invitation to others who might benefit from this information. We will send an iForum log-in and call-in number prior to Wednesday (May 11). We hope you will join us for this extraordinary convening. Thank you for all you do on behalf of children, youth, and families.

From other State Agencies

15. RIEMA to hold preparedness conference August 10-11

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), in conjunction with the International Association of Emergency Managers–Region I, Rhode Island Association of Emergency Managers, and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) Emergency Management and Homeland Security Program, invites you to a two-day Annual Preparedness Conference. The conference will take place Wednesday, August 10, and Thursday, August 11, from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. each day. It will be held at the CCRI Knight Campus, 400 East Ave., Warwick.

In an effort to address multiple emergency management-related topics, we are furthering our scope in support of public-safety professionals. The theme of this year's conference is *Be Rhody Ready*. The conference will consist of knowledgeable speakers, insightful training opportunities, forums in which attendees will be given the chance to speak one-on-one with subject matter experts, and exhibitors throughout the two-day event. A complimentary continental breakfast and lunch will be provided for all conference attendees.

The conference is geared for emergency managers; local, state, and regional partners; and non-governmental organizations. If you are interested in attending this year's conference, please go to the following link and register:

<https://riema.wufoo.com/forms/2016-annual-preparedness-conference-registration>.

If you are seeking lodging for the conference, a block of rooms have been set aside at the Hampton Inn & Suites Warwick/Providence Airport under the event block name IAEM.

All registered attendees will be receiving an informational packet approximately two weeks prior to the conference. If you have any questions about the conference, please contact RIEMA, at 946-9996 or visit the conference webpage, at www.riema.ri.gov/berhodyready.

16. Arts Council to hold free teen film festival May 14

The R.I. State Council on the Arts announces the 8th annual GiveMe5 Teen Film Festival, to be held Saturday, May 14, from 7-9:30 p.m., at the Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. The GiveMe5 Festival features short films (5 minutes or less) created by teen filmmakers from around the state, and it also features feedback from a professional film panel. Entries may include comedy, documentary, film noir, music videos, drama, and more.

The GiveMe5 Teen Film Festival is free and open to the public, suitable for teens and up. Seating is limited, so ticket registration is required. For your free ticket, go to theodeum.org to register. This year's special guest emcee is Rhode Island high-school student and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* actor Robert Capron Jr. This year's professional panel, discussing the films with the teen filmmakers, will include Steven Feinberg, Director of the R.I. Film and Television Office; Saul Ramos, Co-Director of the Latin American Film Festival; and New York film producer and Cumberland native Erika Hampson.

From other organizations

17. Highlander Institute seeks educators for 3rd cohort of Fuse RI Fellows; deadline extended to May 16

The Highlander Institute is seeking rock-star educators to join the third cohort of Highlander Institute's Fuse Fellowship. Would you be willing to join us in this movement and help us spread the word by forwarding this to the educators you support?

[You can find the fellowship application here](#). The application deadline has been extended to **May 16**.

Developed by the [Highlander Institute](#), Fuse RI strives to share, implement, evaluate, and scale blended learning by working with educators and districts across the state. Highlander Institute assembles and supports a "dream team" of Fuse RI Fellows – educators and administrators from schools around Rhode Island. Fuse Fellows partner with another district (separate from the one they work in) and collaborate with that district to assess readiness, analyze data, and help disseminate blended-learning best practices based on each district's specific needs.

If you'd like to learn more, [check out the Fuse RI site](#), which includes a video explaining the Fuse Fellowship and Frequently Asked Questions about the fellowship.

If you have any questions about Fuse RI, please direct them to mklein@highlanderinstitute.org.

18. Free symposium scheduled for May 20 on Restorative Practices for Improving Mental and Social Health

Please join the Central Falls School District Youth Restoration Project, RIC Feinstein School of Education and Human Development, the Mental Health Association of RI and

other practitioners on Friday, **May 20**, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Rhode Island College, Alger Hall 110, for a symposium on improving mental and social health.

The event will include tools for applying restorative practices and stories of success across Rhode Island, including in schools, law enforcement, mental health, social services, and legal settings.

This is a free symposium. Breakfast will be served.
Seating is limited. Registration is required. Register at:

<http://youthrestorationproject.org/registration/>

19. Free summer camp available for grieving children

Camp I Believe is a *free* children's-bereavement camp that provides support to grieving children, with an emphasis placed on strong clinical programming and community engagement. Camp activities and programming focus on providing campers with the opportunity to express feelings and tell their story in a safe environment. Although all of the campers have been identified as grieving, not all of the programming focuses directly on grief and loss. Typical camp activities – swimming, arts and crafts, rope courses, etc. – offer grieving children the opportunity to have fun and to feel “normal” again. All activities, whether directly or indirectly, help campers to establish a sense of community and provide team-building opportunities; activities place an emphasis on personal growth through creative expression and through establishing positive relationships with peers.

Camp I Believe is hosted by Gentiva Hospice, an affiliate of Kindred at Home, and will take place at Camp Aldersgate, in North Scituate, on August 20 and 21. There is no charge for children to attend.

Campers must be between the ages of 7 and 14 and have experienced the death of a loved at least three months prior to the start of camp. An application is required and is due by **August 1**. There are a limited number of spots so early registration is encouraged.

If you have any questions about this camp or need further information, please contact Matthew Georgantas, at 738-1492 or Matthew.Georgantas@Gentiva.com.

Or see:

<http://www.gentivahospicefoundation.org/Bereavement%20Camps%20for%20Children.asp>.

20. NEIT to hold summer Tech Camp for high school juniors, seniors

The New England Institute of Technology is pleased to invite current high-school juniors and seniors to Tech Camp 2016.

Tech Camp 2016 is an opportunity for students to participate in a week-long, hands-on technology class at New England Institute of Technology.

Tech Camp 2016 will run from Monday, July 11 – Thursday, July 14. Aside from the \$75 non-refundable registration fee, Tech Camp 2016 is free. Students will be in class from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. Lunch will be provided. Students may choose to attend one of the following camps.

- Architectural Building Engineering Technology
- Criminal Justice
- Digital Media Technology – Audio Recording

- Digital Media Technology - Production
- Electronics Systems Technology - Drones
- Information Technology - Cyber Security
- Information Technology - Video Game Design Technology
- Mechanical Engineering Technology- 3D Printing
- Graphics, Multimedia and Web Design Technology - Photography

Class sizes are limited, and early registration is encouraged. For registration information, see:

<http://www.neit.edu/Admissions/Programs-for-High-School-Students-Educators/Tech-Camp>.

21. **Poster-contest winners announced**

The Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund is pleased to announce the winners of their 2016 poster contests for middle and high schools. The theme of both contests this year was “Qualities of a Healthy Relationship.” To view the winning posters and honorable mentions, visit www.labmf.org.

High school:

Winner: Hannah Simas, Warwick Area Career and Technical Center; teacher, Jann Gartner

Second Place: Meredith Liu, East Greenwich High School; teacher, Krista Harvey

Third Place: Joel Baker, Warwick Area Career and Technical Center; teacher, Jann Gartner

Middle school:

Winner: Olivia Nippe-Jeakins, Archie Cole Middle School; teacher, Deb McMullen

Second Place: Sean Reardon, Curtis Corner Middle School; teacher, Holly Harrington

Third Place: Millie Wignall, Park View Middle School; teacher, Andrea Saccoccio

Winning students are presented with cash prizes, and copies of winning posters are distributed to Rhode Island schools.

We would like to recognize and thank the following teachers whose students submitted entries: Jann Gartner-Rogers, Warwick Career and Technical Center; Krista Harvey and Katie Mangano, East Greenwich High School; Janice Strain, North Kingstown High School; Synora Matacia, Chariho Regional High School; Heidi Koss, Westerly High School; Mrs. Shiel, St. Mary Home for Children; Deb McMullen, Archie Cole Middle School; Holly Harrington, Curtis Corner Middle School; Andrea Saccoccio, Park View Middle School; G Hancox, LaSalle Academy; Carol Jeranian, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School; Mrs. Dadamio, Chariho Regional Middle School; and Traci Fairchild, Rocky Hill School.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>